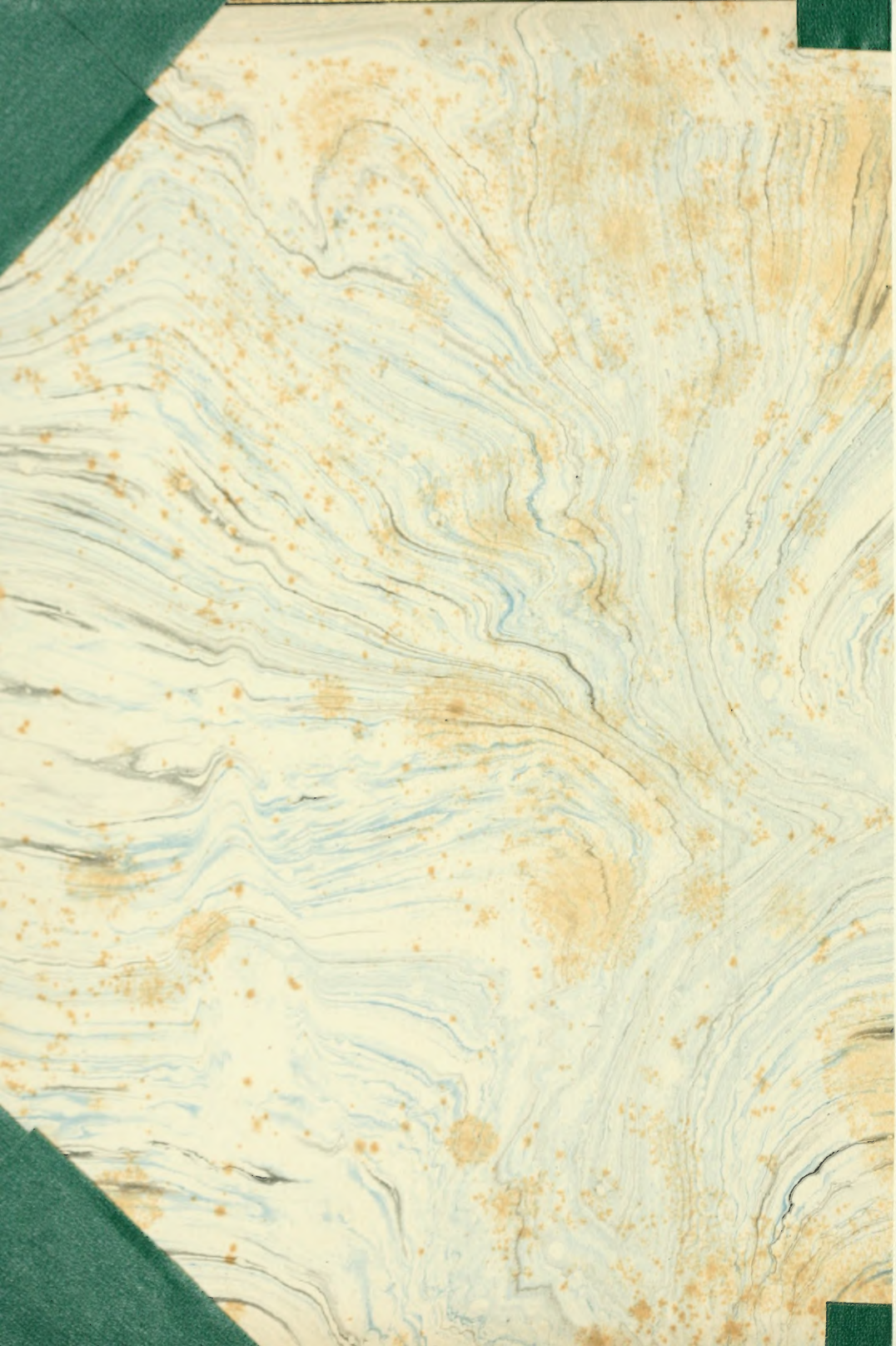
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Leonora.

London:
Printed by A. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

Leonora.

Translated by

Julia M. Cameron.

With

Illustrations by D. Maclise, R. A.

Engraved by John Thompson.



London:
Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans.
1847.

Preface.

THE following translation of Bürger's Leonora was made before the Author had seen any other version of this justly celebrated ballad. As she does not profess to have added any thing to the original, the sole merit of her version (if it have any) must consist in accurately and vividly representing the German poem; for she has endeavoured not only to exhibit the spirit, but to follow where it was possible the very words, of Bürger; and, in consequence of the common origin of the two languages, this can frequently be done in translating from German into English, or from English into German, as has been well exemplified in their translation of our Shakspeare.

The version had been lying upwards of a year in a port-

folio, when the Author became acquainted with the celebrated translations of William Taylor of Norwich and Walter Scott. These distinguished men have infused their own genius into their translations; and Bürger is forgotten, whilst Scott and Taylor arrest the attention, and dwell upon the memory as for ever associated with his popular ballad. In this instance the case will be found to be far different. Bürger must here be felt throughout. The deep pathos and the simplicity of the dialogue, and the mystery, the terror, and the supernatural rapidity of the ride and its conclusion, if they are found here at all, are his. Deep feeling finds its vent in the simplest words, and thus it is that Bürger excels Scott and Taylor in describing the broken-heartedness of the afflicted maiden. The twenty-second stanza is, in this translation, quite literal; and, in the whole circle of our English poetry, never was the passion of love more faithfully painted. Scott's translation is incomplete; and, like Taylor's, its effect, whatever else it may be, is not that of the German poem. Masters of their own art, they could not be tied down to copy a portrait which

another master had painted. They could not strike their lyre to sing without variation the song of a brother bard. An humbler disciple of the art can best do this; and the present Translator, not aspiring to create, has studied only to catch the likeness of a beautiful picture, and to copy faithfully each feature and expression of the original. One only deviation must be acknowledged, viz. the changing of the metre where the spectral career begins. It was thought that the rapidity of the action would be better represented by rhymed couplets of equal length, than by the stanza which had been previously adopted.

The lines,

> "Tramp tramp across the land they rode,
> Splash splash across the sea,"

which have attracted so much attention to the poem, do not appear in this translation. They are Taylor's own; and Scott, fascinated with their vivid reality, embodied them in his own version with confession and apology. Not being Bürger's, they are not in this translation, which may at

first probe a disappointment to the reader: but the Author does not fear the sacrifice of them; for Bürger in his own strength can stand alone, and, as he has laid the scene of his poem in the interior of Germany, the introduction of the sea would have been incongruous. Neither is the epoch changed, as in the versions in question, which make the lover a victim of the crusade of Frederick Barbarossa, instead of one of the slain in a war between "the Empress and the King." In a word, it has been the aim of this translation to let Bürger speak to the English reader as nearly as possible in his own phrase, and to tell his own tale.

Leonora.



Leonora.

Leonora from an anxious dream
Starts up at break of day:
"My William, art thou false or slain?
Oh! William, why delay?"

ii.

With Frederick's host to battle-field
Her lover had been led;
No tidings came, no line disclosed
If he were false or dead.

iii.

The Empress and the King no more
Engage in bloody feud;
They've signed a covenant of peace,
With hearts now turned to good.

ib.

And marching home with shout and song,
Bedecked with laurels green,
With kettle drums and kling and klang,
The joyous troops are seen.

b.

Whilst old and young o'er path and plain
Go forth the host to meet,
Shouting their joyous Jubilee
The comers home to greet.

vi.

"The work of strife at last is done,
Praise God!" said many a bride:
"Welcome! loved comers from the war,"
Parents and children cried.



But why stands Leonora there
Alone, amongst the rest?
Whilst all embrace, to her pale lip
No loving lip is prest.

viii.

She hurriedly, now up now down,
Questions the host in vain;
No one can tell, no one can say,
Was William false, or slain.

ix.

They have passed on, the warrior host;
And wild is her despair;
Upon the earth she madly rolls,
And tears her raven hair.



I.

The mother to her comfort flies:
"Oh! why this grief so wild?"
She clasps her daughter in her arms,
And cries "God calm my child!"

D.MACLISE. R.A. J.THOMPSON.

xi.

"Oh! mother, mother, lost is lost!
Ruthless is God's decree;
I bid farewell to earth and heaven;
Oh, woe! oh, woe is me!"

xii.

"Oh! God is love, in him put trust,
Thy Paternoster say:
All that God doth is wisely done;
Have faith, my child, and pray."

xiii.

"Oh! mother, God hath not well done;
Your words are idle, vain;
I've prayed in vain, what use to pray
Now my poor William's slain!"

xiv.

"Oh! help, God help, my darling child!
The sacrament receive;
This holy rite thy grief will soothe;
God helps those who believe."

xv.

"Oh! mother, for my bitter woe
No rite can solace give;
Can sacrament restore the dead,
And make my William live?"

xvi.

"Hark! child: perchance he's false, not dead,
Thy tears they flow in vain;
False are his vows, his perjured heart
Cast back to him again."

xvii.

"Away from thee, in Hungary
Another hath he wed;
Much his false vow shall profit him,
He'll burn for it when dead."

xviii.

"Oh! mother, mother, lost is lost!
Forlorn is still forlorn;
Death now is all I hope or seek,
Would God I'd ne'er been born!

xix.

"For ever quenched be life's faint spark!
To me no mercy's given:
Come death! I seek, in its dark gloom,
Nor life, nor hope, nor heaven."

xx.

"Oh! spare, God spare! her heart is torn;
Pity my erring child!
Judge not her words, for reason's gone;
Oh! be in mercy mild!

xxi.

"Be calm, my child, forget thy woe,
And think of God and heaven;
God, thy Redeemer, hath to thee
Himself for bridegroom given."

xxii.

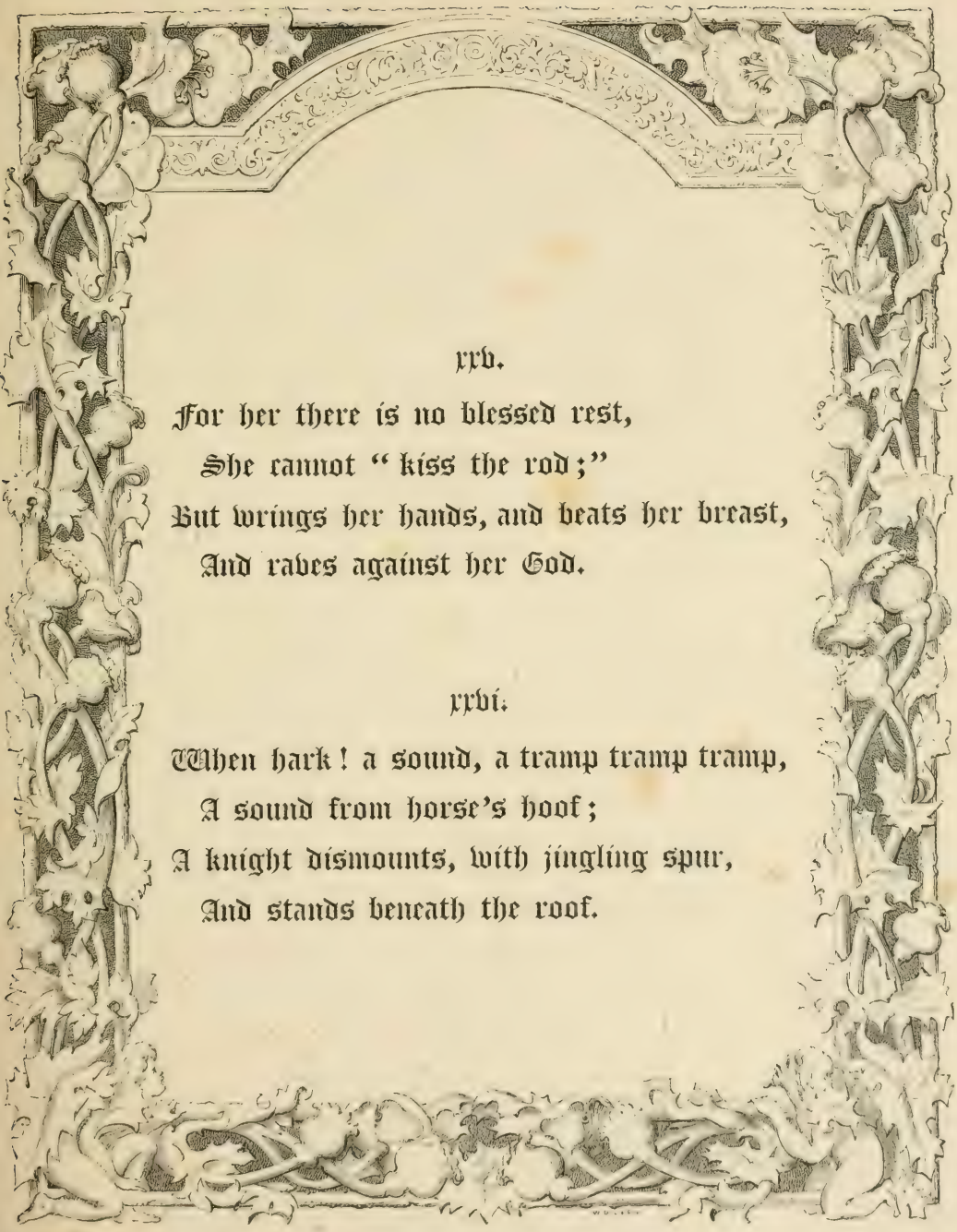
"Oh! mother, mother, what is heaven?
Oh! mother, what is hell?
To be with William, that's my heaven;
Without him, that's my hell.

xviii.

"Come death! come death! I loathe my life;
All hope is in death's gloom.
My William's gone, what's left on earth?
Would I were in his tomb!"

xvib.

The sun hath set with golden light,
The stars illume the skies;
All nature's sunk in sweet repose,
Leonora only sighs.



xxv.

For her there is no blessed rest,
She cannot "kiss the rod;"
But wrings her hands, and beats her breast,
And raves against her God.

xxvi.

When hark! a sound, a tramp tramp tramp,
A sound from horse's hoof;
A knight dismounts, with jingling spur,
And stands beneath the roof.

xxvii.

Now kling kling kling, the door bells ring;
She, anxious, bends to hear
The well loved voice—yes, that it is
Which sounds upon her ear.

xxviii.

"Holla, my love! Leonora, rise!
Art watching, or art sleeping?
Art loving me with constant soul?
Art glad, my love, or weeping?"



"My William, thou? and riding too?
From whence so late by night?
Since dawn I've watched and wailed and wept;
My poor heart's broken quite."

JOHN THOMPSON

xxx.

"From far Bohemia's land I come,
I only ride by night,
And with thee thither must return
Ere dawn of morning light."

xxxi.

"Oh! William, first come in; come close;
Round thee my arms I'll fold:
Through hawthorn hear the whistling wind;
Come close, heart's love, thou 'rt cold."

xxxii.

"Heed not the whistling wind; my steed
Doth paw, his mane doth bristle;
I must not here delay, my child;
Let whistle wind, let whistle.

xxxiii.

"Up! up! dress, spring behind me, mount,
Our course be quickly sped;
Ere morn a hundred miles we ride,
To reach the bridal bed."

xxxiv.

"Oh! William, say not so; just hark!
The clock now chimes eleven;
A hundred miles we cannot go,
So cold, so dark the heaven."

xxxv.

"See here! see here! the moon shines clear,
We and the dead ride fast;
I promise thee to bridal bed
To bring ere night hath past."

xxvi.

"Say on; the bridal bed where is't?
And where thy nuptial hall?"
"Six boards and two short planks our bed,
Far, far, still, cool, and small."

xxvii.

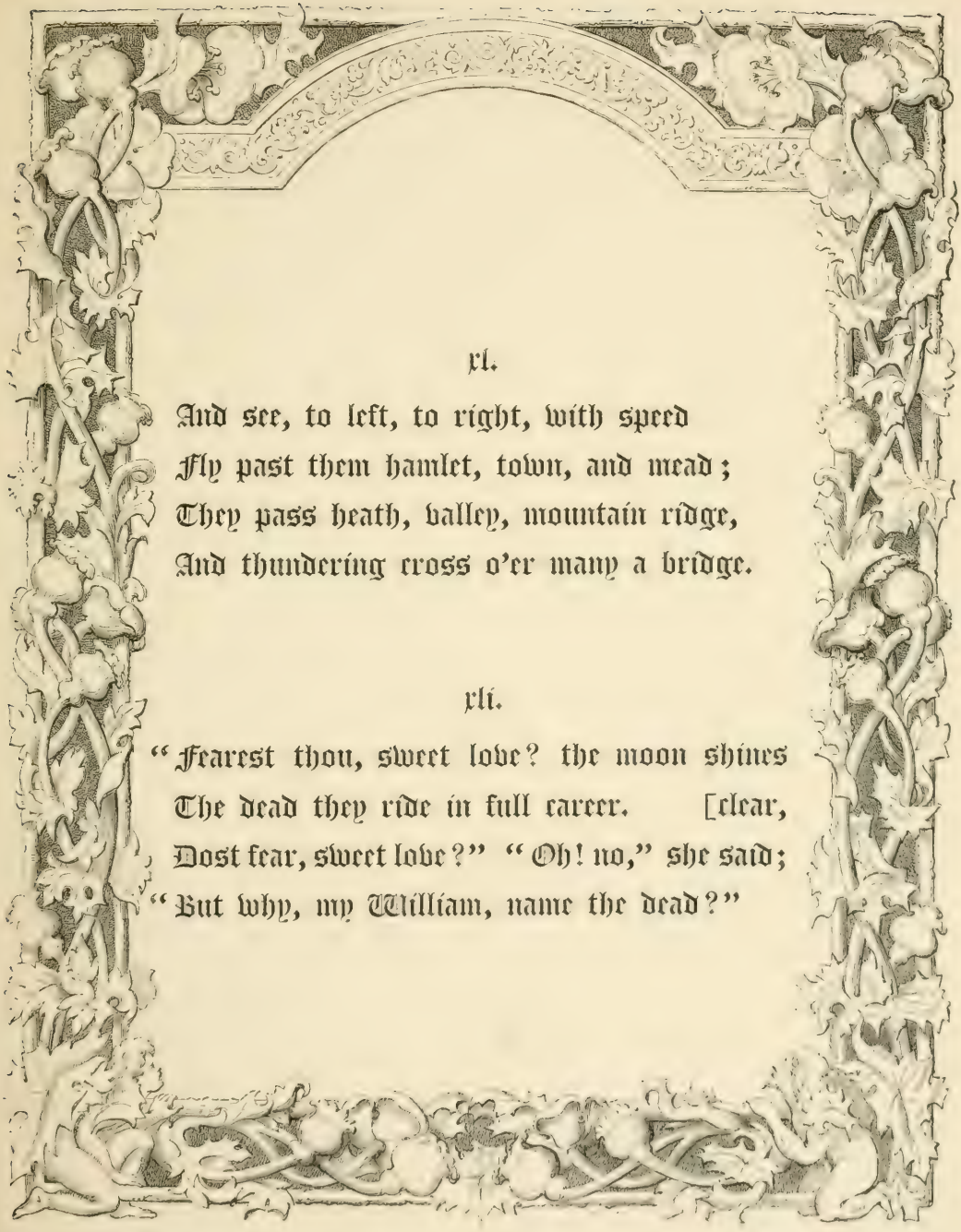
"Hast room for me?" "For thee and me.
Come, dress, and mount, and ride;
The nuptial guests impatient wait,
The door stands open wide."

xxviii.

The loving Leonora starts,
She springs upon his steed,
Close round him clasps her lily hands,
And forward on they speed.

xxix.

And now, hurrah! tramp tramp, the horse
Snorting pursues his fiery course;
With showers of sparks the shattered flint
Returns the horse-shoe's iron dint.



xl.

And see, to left, to right, with speed
Fly past them hamlet, town, and mead;
They pass heath, valley, mountain ridge,
And thundering cross o'er many a bridge.

xli.

"Fearest thou, sweet love? the moon shines clear,
The dead they ride in full career.
Dost fear, sweet love?" "Oh! no," she said;
"But why, my William, name the dead?"

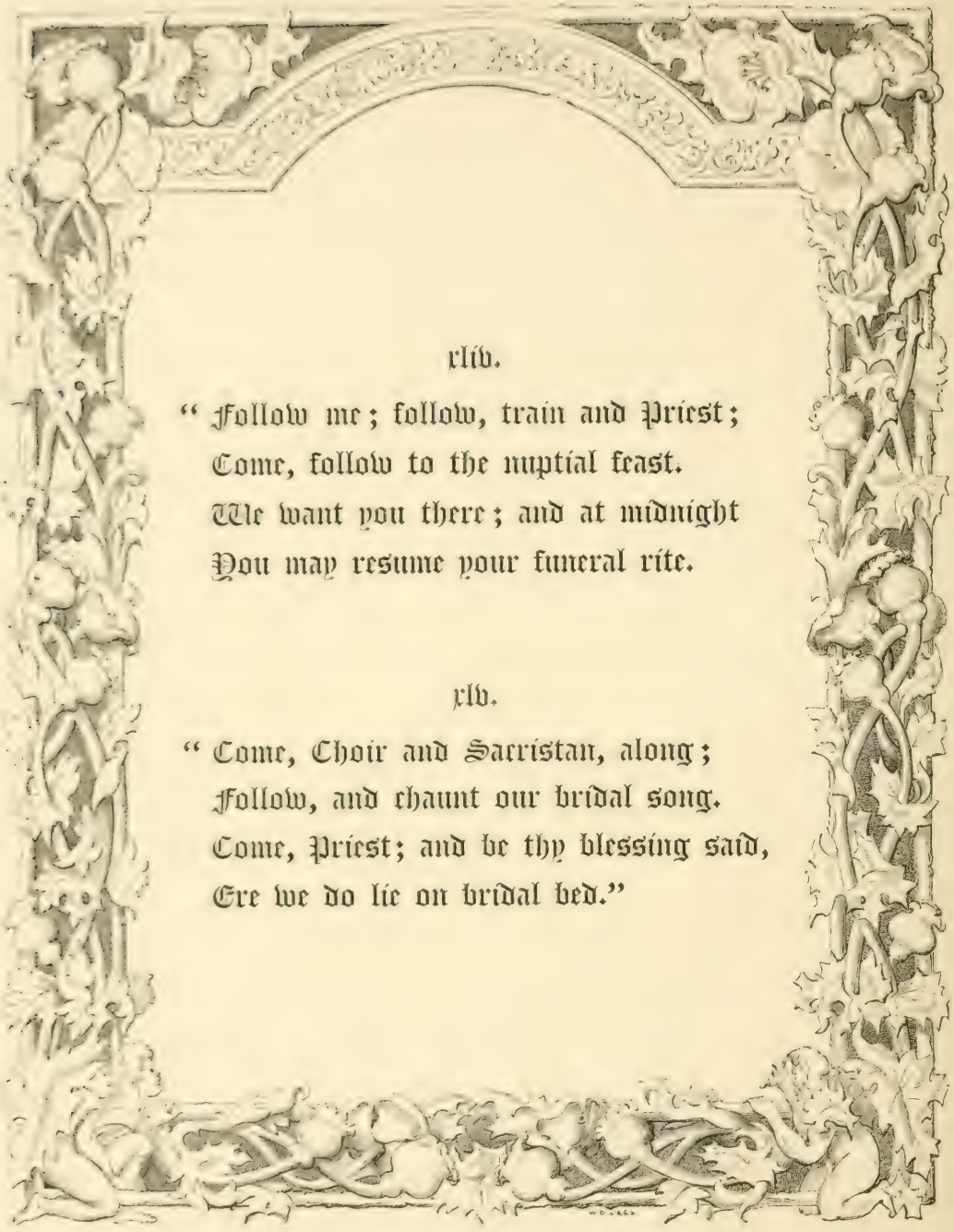
xlii.

Hark! why that sound? who, solemn, sing?
Why dismal flaps the raven's wing?
A funeral chaunt arrests the ear,
Here comes a hearse, there moves a bier.



Now nearer draws the funeral train,
Like croak of frogs resounds the strain.
Why tolls the bell? who, solemn, say
"Dust unto dust, and clay to clay"?

D. MACLISE, R.A.

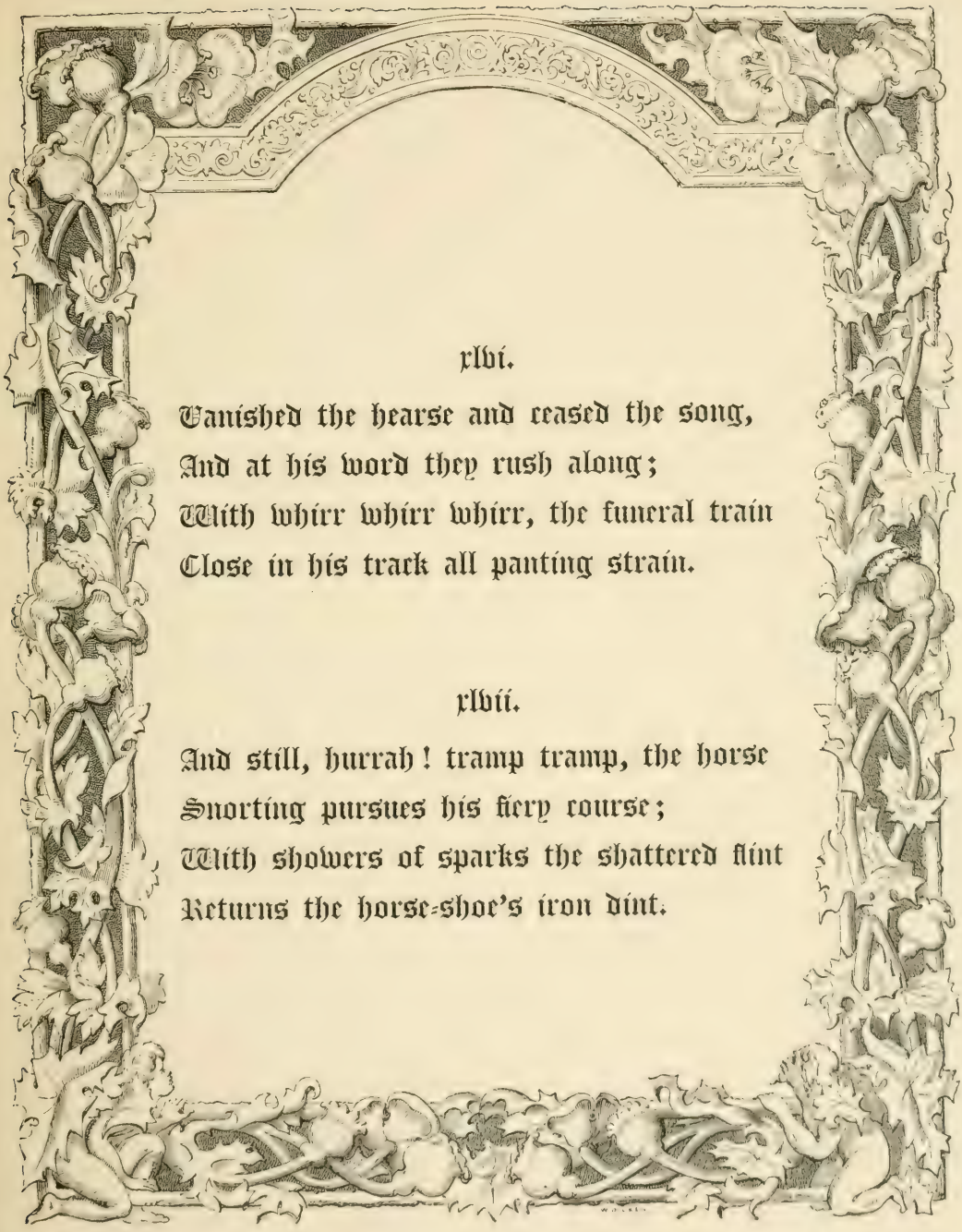


xliv.

" Follow me; follow, train and Priest;
Come, follow to the nuptial feast.
We want you there; and at midnight
You may resume your funeral rite.

xlv.

" Come, Choir and Sacristan, along;
Follow, and chaunt our bridal song.
Come, Priest; and be thy blessing said,
Ere we do lie on bridal bed."



xlvi.

Vanished the hearse and ceased the song,
And at his word they rush along;
With whirr whirr whirr, the funeral train
Close in his track all panting strain.

xlvii.

And still, hurrah! tramp tramp, the horse
Snorting pursues his fiery course;
With showers of sparks the shattered flint
Returns the horse-shoe's iron dint.



xlviii.

Fast flew to left, fast flew to right,
Each object as it came in sight;
The mountains, bushes, hedges flew,
All mingled in the hurried view.

xlix.

"Dost fear, sweet love? the moon shines clear,
The dead they ride in full career. [said;
Dost fear, my child?" "Oh! no," she
"But why not leave in peace the dead?"

I.

See here! see there! a ghastly sight
But dimly seen by pale moonlight,
A felon to the wheel is bound,
An airy rabble dance around.

II.

"Ho, Rabble, here! with me advance;
Come dance for us the nuptial dance;
Close in our flying footsteps tread,
Till we do mount the bridal bed."

lii.

And true enough; for, hoosh hoosh hoosh,
As if a gust in hazel bush
Through withered leaves and branches blew,
Rustling was heard this airy crew.

liii.

Still faster now, tramp tramp, the horse
Snorting pursues his fiery course;
With showers of sparks the shattered flint
Returns the horse-shoe's iron dint.

lib.

The moon-lit scene, so fast it flew,
All nature seemed beneath their view
On every side to fly, and far
Above their heads flew moon and star.

lb.

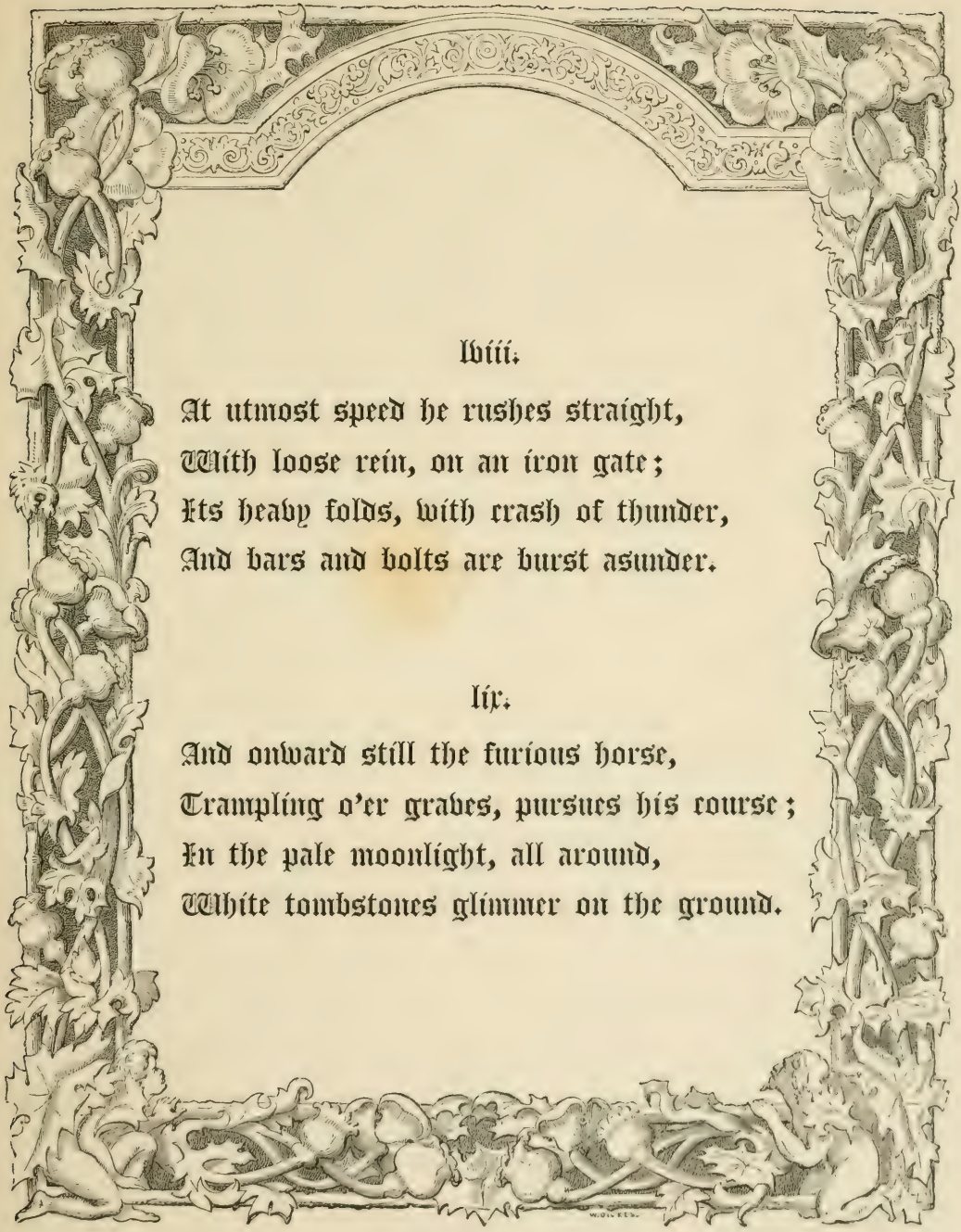
"Dost fear, sweet lobe? the moon shines clear,
The dead they ride in full career.
My lobe, dost fear?" "Oh! no," she said;
"But why not leabe in peace the dead?"

lvi.

"Haste! haste! The cock crows, night is worn;
I smell the freshening breeze of morn;
Our sand is run, and done our course,
Strain every nerve, my raven horse."

lvii.

"Hurrah! hurrah! the dead ride fast,
Hurrah! hurrah! we're here at last;
The nuptial bed is open wide,
We'be reached it now, my lovely bride."



lviii.

At utmost speed he rushes straight,
With loose rein, on an iron gate;
Its heavy folds, with crash of thunder,
And bars and bolts are burst asunder.

lix.

And onward still the furious horse,
Trampling o'er graves, pursues his course;
In the pale moonlight, all around,
White tombstones glimmer on the ground.

lx.

Now see! now see! Where is the knight?
What is this horrid ghastly sight?
All shivering falls the warrior's steel,
A skeleton from head to heel!

lxi.

And as his flesh, so doth his hair,
All mouldering, leave a death skull bare;
His bony fingers, lean and lithe,
Clasp round an hourglass and a scythe.

lxii.

Now reared the horse, while sparks and flame
From his spread nostril flashing came.
He sinks! the earth doth open yawn!
Leonora's left! the horse is gone!

lxiii.

The heavens with yelling cries resound,
And earth's deep bosom groans around;
Leonora's heart, amidst the strife,
Doth aching beat 'twixt death and life:

lxiv.

Whilst round and round, with airy prance,
The ghosts enchained in circle dance;
And, as they dance, they slowly groan
These solemn words with solemn tone:

lxv.

"Endure! endure! though break the heart,
Yet judge not God's decree.
Thy body from thy soul doth part,
Oh! may God pardon thee!"



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